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Expanding Project Excellence

05.27.2011 | Business, Campus and Community The University of Dayton's School of Business Administration on June 1 will launch a new center to apply student power to help area businesses solve complex problems.

The Center for Project Excellence will expand opportunities for real-world experiences for students and at the same time, increase service to the broader business community, according to Matthew Shank, dean of the School of Business Administration.

"Connecting theory with practice is a hallmark of a University of Dayton business education and we already offer considerable hands-on experiences for students to work on real projects for businesses," Shank said. "The center will allow us to take on projects that extend beyond a semester and provide a single point of entry for organizations interested in high quality project help at little or no cost."

Charles Wells, department chair of MIS, operations management and decision sciences, said for more than 25 years students have been connected with local businesses on projects for senior capstone courses.

Nearly 300 completed projects have resulted in documented savings of more than \$25 million for the participating businesses, he said. "But many project requests go unfilled, either because they are too small for a capstone course or are too large, exceeding the nine-month scope of two semesters."

The center will be led by Stephen Hall, an MIS and operations management faculty member, who has been named as its first director. Hall's background includes more than 30 years of experience in business as an executive and chief information officer for several local and global companies.

"The center will take that work to the next level, and allow us to reach more business and non-profit clients and provide great experiences for our students," he said.

A goal for the center is to expand its offerings to include other business departments, such as marketing and accounting, and eventually develop multi-disciplinary teams from other areas of the University to assist companies and provide learning experiences for students, Hall said.

Some past projects have included helping a company solve a complex information system problem, and devising a more efficient workflow for a manufacturer.

"The center is a win for the local business community and a win for University of Dayton business students," according to Gary Codeluppi, senior vice president for the Ross Group, a Dayton-based software services firm who sits on the University's MIS Advisory Board.

"The Dayton community will benefit by having access to highly educated resources at very affordable rates to help small businesses and non-profits manage their projects," Codeluppi said. "University of Dayton students will benefit by applying their classroom learning to real world problems and making a positive impact on the businesses they serve."

Tom Furey, president of Standard Register Industrial and a member of the Operations Management Advisory Board, said the company submits a project every semester through the capstone program. Projects have included the development of a data model to help the company forecast revenues and an assessment and plan to better route printing work to different facilities.

"University of Dayton students come in with a broad understanding of best practices in business and a level of maturity that makes them very effective in applying academic concepts to real-world situations," Furey said.

"The students are phenomenal. They hit the ground running, so their work is very efficient and a whole lot less expensive," he said. "The projects are also a great source of talent for recruiting."

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